

Santa Rosa County
Local Mitigation Strategy Steering Committee
Milton, Florida
February 19, 2003

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Santa Rosa County Local Mitigation Strategy Steering Committee met on the above date. A sign in sheet showing all members present is attached. Chairperson Paula Davis called the meeting to order at 1:40 p.m. Welcomes were made by the Chairperson and attendee self-introductions were made.

2. General Business

a. Approval of November 13, 2002 meeting minutes.

Donna Adams moved approval of the November 13, 2002 minutes, Rosalynn Bates seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

b. Mitigation Project Proposal(s).

There were no mitigation projects proposed. Due to time constraints and discussions on meeting the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and Chapter 9G-22, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), there was no discussion on the Prioritized Mitigation Project List.

c. Other Business

1) E-mail voting and the Sunshine Law

An issue raised at the November 13, 2002, meeting was whether voting on urgent proposed projects could be conducted through use of email as an alternative to calling an emergency meeting. Ms. Davis was to check with the County Attorney.

Mr. Tom Dannheisser, the County Attorney, later advised Ms. Davis that it is not acceptable protocol to e-mail other committee members. When a proposed mitigation project needs an emergency vote, the committee will have to physically meet, just briefly, to conduct a vote.

2) Proposed "Recording Secretary" position

Chairperson Davis introduced Ms. Kelly Hobbs with the Clerk's office and explained that Ms. Hobbs will be taking minutes for the LMS Committee. Ms. Davis explained that in the future all minutes will be posted on the County website. In addition, notice of the LMS meetings will be published along with other County meetings in the monthly newspaper advertisement.

3. Chapter 9G-22 Annual Report Submitted to Florida Department of Emergency Management

Jerrie Lewis reported that an annual report required by Chapter 9G-22, F.A.C. was submitted by the last working weekday of each January as required by the Rule. (Report Requirements provided in Attachment A). Lewis said the annual report is to include notification of officers, people on the task force, along with written documentation of written invitations to a broad variety of people to participate in the LMS planning process. Lewis assembled the report and forwarded it to Davis to obtain the signature of the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners on the cover letter and to forward the report on to Tallahassee prior to the deadline.

4. Status of draft revised Local Mitigation Steering plan submitted to Florida Department of Emergency Management on December 2, 2002. (Florida Department of Emergency Management/Federal Emergency Management Agency written comments have not been received.)

Jerrie Lewis provided combined coverage of agenda items 4-7 in a power point presentation (Hard Copy in file). Lewis said the presentation gives an overview of where the committee has been and where it needs to go. The presentation was titled The Santa Rosa County Local Mitigation Steering Plan: the past and the future. Lewis explained that in 1998-1999, Santa Rosa County prepared and adopted a Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) plan following state guidelines established by the State of Florida. Lewis said the 1998-1999 adopted Plan does not meet new federal and state requirements and requires major revisions/modifications.

New requirements include the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K) and the State Chapter 9G -22.001-.007, Florida Administrative Code (FAC). In addition, Region IV of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has published their own Minimum Standards of Acceptability which are a more strict interpretation of CFR 44, Part 201.6, known as the Interim Final Rule which implements the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.

Status of the December 2, 2002 draft plan: Lewis said at the November 15, 2002, meeting, the Local Mitigation Strategy Steering Committee approved a work plan proposed by West Florida Regional Planning Council staff to partially address some of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requirements. For the requirements that could not be addressed within the four to six week time period, descriptions of how the requirements would be addressed in the future were documented in a format called a "plan to complete the plan." Ms. Lewis reported that the plan was submitted to the Florida Department of Emergency Management (FEMA) in time to meet the December 2, 2002 State deadline. Lewis said that any additional work on the December 2002 plan draft is on hold pending receipt of written comments and clear directions and guidance from both the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State. In addition, the draft plan is on hold pending receipt of federal planning funds to fund the mandate. The federal funds will go to the State and the State will distribute them to the local governments. The timeframe and amount of funds are not known at this point.

Review Comments on the December 2, 2002 draft plan: Lewis explained that the State is reconsidering their strict deadlines. The joint FEMA/State review sessions were significantly delayed and the formal review comments were not received on February 15, 2003, as first expected. Ms. Lewis explained she fully expects to extensively revise the December draft because 4-6 weeks was so inadequate to pull together a draft plan to meet so many new requirements.

Davis applauded Lewis's efforts in getting the draft plan together to meet the State's December 2, 2002 deadline.

Plan Guidance still Unclear: Davis reiterated that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the State do not really know what they want yet, and they are continuously trying to clarify the process and the plan requirements by getting ideas from all of the different plans that were submitted in December.

Lewis said the challenge for this committee is to engage in a Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 compliant mitigation planning process and to produce a Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 plan that will pass the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 compliance review. She said the reward for compliance will be eligibility to receive federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) grant funds for disasters declared after November 1, 2003. Conversely, if the county does not satisfactorily meet these requirements, they will not be eligible.

Lewis said the plan, once completed, will have to be constantly monitored and maintained and will have to be submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency every five years for a compliance review.

5. Federal Emergency Management Region IV Minimum Standards of Acceptability (See discussion in #4)

6. Organizing Resources: Next step in addressing requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. (See Federal Emergency Management's how-to guide "Getting Started" at www.fema.gov/fima/planresource.shtm)

Lewis said identifying and organizing resources now will pay dividends when faced with the more challenging tasks that will come later in the planning process. She said organizing resources is part of the mitigation planning process proposed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Lewis said organizing resources consists of three steps: 1) assess community support 2) build the planning team 3) engage the public. She said organizing resources can be accomplished by following the guidance provided in several planning tools provided by The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the State. All of the planning tools and several other guidance documents involved in organizing resources are available on the website listed above.

7. Mitigation 20/20 Software Program and Software Training

Lewis reported that the Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM) has purchased this mitigation software program for each county in the state, and that they are encouraging county's to use the software to produce local plans that will be based on a consistent methodology across the state.

Lewis reported that she attended a software training workshop on February 6, 2003 hosted by FDEM in Tallahassee. Lewis explained that FDEM provided her with Santa Rosa County's software CD during the workshop. Lewis said the software is a complete local mitigation strategy support software program that uses all four programs of Microsoft Office Professional 2000 (Word, Access, Excel and PowerPoint). The software program is primarily a database that organizes and stores information required by the new state and federal requirements.

Lewis said the software includes templates for a local mitigation strategy taskforce structure as well as other components of a local mitigation strategy plan. Lewis said the program can be used in its entirety to develop a plan from beginning to end or individual modules of the program can be used with existing plans to support and improve their implementation. Lewis explained that the software program included examples of by-laws that characterize the task force, operating procedures used for conducting the planning process, and includes a member application that can be modified and personalized for the County.

Lewis emphasized that the Federal Emergency Management Agency places as much or more emphasis on the planning process than the resultant plan, and makes it mandatory to document in detail the planning process. She pointed out the importance of a task force structure and how it actually initiates the mitigation planning process.

Lewis recommended that the committee consider how they might like to structure a task force and modify the example bylaws to formalize the task force as an organization.

8. Other Business

Ms. Lewis's PowerPoint presentation generated several questions and much discussion among attendees. One attendee asked for clarification of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 process being on hold pending federal funds. Mr. Larry McDonald of the West Florida Regional Planning Council responded.

Mr. McDonald said that the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region IV and the State of Florida are trying to reach an agreement on what it is the State of Florida and its 67 counties have to develop and provide to meet the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requirements. He said each of the Federal Emergency Management regions have some discretion on what the regional rules will be, and that Region IV has developed a document titled Minimum Standards of Acceptability which consist of a more strict and expanded interpretation of the national requirements.

Mr. McDonald said the verbal field rules have been changing at least once a month if not two and three times per month in terms of deadlines and what needs to be there. He said there has been a tremendous amount of non-administrative work required since last September when the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K) letters started coming out. The work resulting from the DMA2K requirements is well beyond the scope of what the West Florida Regional Planning Council has in its contract to do in terms of staffing of this Local Mitigation Strategy Committee and this is creating a financial crisis.

McDonald said they have focused on the county funds they have available for routine staffing and then some funds are coming out of their own internal accounts. He said not knowing the amount of funds and when they are going to be available is a true problem, and if they do not become available soon, they will have to focus only on the routine staffing services and suspend work on the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 until the funds become available. He re-emphasized that the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 task is far beyond the scope of what they are contracted to do at this time.

Mr. McDonald explained further that the State promised planning funds from Federal Emergency Management Agency

(FEMA) last September with no results to date. McDonald said there is a financial problem for the committee at this time, and he said there needs to be guidance on what to do since this information has been brought forward.

Scott Paul of Gulf Breeze said there are several variables beyond our control; most of them bear directly on the ability to complete the task. However, he said there are three things that can be done administratively in the planning process within the next couple of meetings. He said things like selecting a task force and beginning work on by-laws would be critical to making any secondary case to the county for funds to bridge the gap between now and when the federal funds become available.

All agreed the structuring of a task force and getting committee(s) in a functioning mode based on 9G-22 FAC was the most important thing to do at this time and discussion ensued on when work on the bylaws should be completed and presented. Lewis advised in setting the date for the next meeting to consider that there is a lot of work to do with imposed deadlines of anywhere from November 1, 2003 to April 2004. Lewis said she is not sure if quarterly meetings are going allow enough time to complete all the requirements in time enough to meet those deadlines.

All agreed a by-laws adhoc subcommittee should to be formed. A list of adhoc committee members to develop by-laws for the Local Mitigation Strategy Committee is as follows: Beckie Faulkenberry (Santa Rosa County Planning Department), Rosalynn Bates (American Red Cross), Dana Winslett, (NAS Whiting Field), Linda Carden (Town of Jay), Donna Adams (City of Milton), Scott Paul (Gulf Breeze Chamber of Commerce), and Pat D'Asaro (Volunteer).

9. Establish Next Meeting Date

The by-laws subcommittee meeting was scheduled for March 12, 2003 at 1:30 p.m. in the Emergency Management conference room, and the deadline for all recommendations or proposed changes to the by-laws must be made to Jerrie Lewis no later than March 5, 2003.

The next regular meeting for the committee as a whole to act on the recommendations of the by-laws subcommittee is scheduled for March 26, 2003 at 1:30 in the Emergency Management conference room. Scott Paul moved approval of these two meeting dates and times, which were seconded by Rosalynn Bates, and the motion carried unanimously.

Emergency Management Update

Dave Ling spoke about some of the things that have occurred operationally with Emergency Management and the county since last meeting. He talked about two training exercises that took place within Santa Rosa County, one of those being a hazardous material related terrorism exercise. He said these exercises contributed to regional efforts undergoing as far as homeland defense. Ling said both of these were a success in challenging local emergency based personnel as well personnel in the surrounding areas. He spoke of an incident where Santa Rosa County deputies responded to a domestic violence call where they were directed to a mobile home on Persimmon Hollow Road. Ling said the deputies walked into the mobile home and were overcome because the trailer was being used as a meth lab. Ling said a meth lab is used to make methamphetamines which are very commonly used narcotics manufactured with very lethal chemicals and processes. Ling said these meth labs give off very lethal gases and the gases overcame the deputies. He said they stumbled out and only one was seriously affected. He said all emergency responders and other emergency personnel responded correctly and to the best of their ability. Ling said these labs have become so dangerous that unless there is a life to be saved, Florida Drug Enforcement Agency is called in and they are responsible for shutting it down and getting it cleaned up. He said the gases are dangerous and overcome you, and it can also explode. Ling said this is a big issue in the county right now and people should be made aware of these ongoing things happening in the county.

Ling said he wants the public to know they are prepared and ready when something bad happens. Ling said he hopes everyone has been following everything as far as Homeland Defense is concerned. He said the whole purpose of a terrorist aside from their political cause is to disrupt the way of life. Ling said the federal government has to take certain actions that restrict certain freedoms of Americans, and this is the purpose of the terrorist. He said go about your normal business, but be aware and report anything out of the ordinary.

10. Adjourn

There being no further business to be brought before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Attendees: Donna Adams, Steve Mewborn, Kelly Hobbs, Patricia D'Asaro, Rosalyn Bates, Linda Carden, Beckie Faulkenberry, Dave Ling, Scott Paul, Larry McDonald, Jerrie Lewis, and Paula Davis.

Agenda Package/Handouts: Agenda, 9G-22.004 table, Minutes of 11/13/02, Example Mitigation Task Force Organization Structure, Table of Contents (overview) for Example By-laws and Operating Procedures, Mitigation 20/20 Software Program Overview.